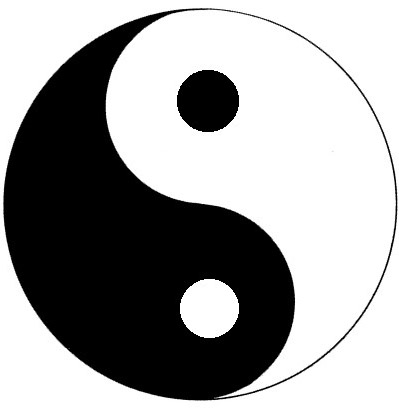
Chuang Tzu and Taoism

<http://www.truetao.org/chuang/> <http://www.osholeela.com/poetry/chuangtzu/index.html>

<http://acc6.its.brooklyn.cuny.edu/~phalsall/texts/chuangtz.html>

<http://www.newcastletaichi.co.uk/Chuang%20Tzu.htm>

Taoism, Chinese philosophical and religious system, dating from about the 4th century BC. Among native Chinese schools of thought, the influence of Daoism has been second only to that of Confucianism.

**Basic Tenets**

The essential Taoist philosophical and mystical beliefs can be found in the (Tao-te Ching, Classic of the Way and Its Power, attributed to the historical figure Laozi (Lao-tzu, 570?-490? BC) and possibly compiled by followers as late as the 3rd century BC. Whereas Confucianism urged the individual to conform to the standards of an ideal social system, Daoism maintained that the individual should ignore the dictates of society and seek only to conform with the underlying pattern of the universe, the Dao (or Tao, meaning “way”), which can neither be described in words nor conceived in thought. To be in accord with Dao, one has to “do nothing” (wuwei)—that is, nothing strained, artificial, or unnatural. Through spontaneous compliance with the impulses of one's own essential nature and by emptying oneself of all doctrines and knowledge, one achieves unity with the Dao and derives from it a mystical power. This power enables one to transcend all mundane distinctions, even the distinction of life and death. At the sociopolitical level, the Daoists called for a return to primitive agrarian life.

In Daoism, Yin and Yang are negative and positive principles of the universe. One cannot exist without the other, and they often represent opposites in relations to each other. As you have more and more Yang, eventually, Yin will appear and replace this increase. Similarly in the opposite direction, Yang will appear to replace the increase in Yin.

The Yin Yang symbol depicts this clearly. As you travel around the circle, white or black will increase, until the opposite color is almost gone, but never totally gone. The cycle then repeats for the opposite color.

What seems like Yin is often supported by Yang, and vice-versa. As an example, to truly know “Mountain”, you must know what Valley” is, and without Mountain as a comparison, nothing is “Valley.” Thus, while keeping to one end, do not shun the opposite end, but embrace both as they are. Allowing Yin to flourish, you welcome Yang. By letting go of Yin, you are waiting for its return. As an example, before you can possess something, you must be willing to let it go.

Yin and Yang often represent the following opposites...

\* Yin

\* Yang

o Positive

o Male

o Light

o Good

o Heaven

o Negative

o Female

o Dark

o Evil

o Earth

Chuang Tzu is believed to lived in the Fourth or Third Century BCE, at a time when China was split up into a number of states weakly held together by the Chou dynasty. He was a minor government official for a while and was offered higher office, but declined on the grounds that it would limit his freedom.

His thought is contained in the 33 chapters that remain of the *Chuang Tzu*, which describes both his philosophy and his way of life. In it, Chuang Tzu enlarges on the teachings of Lao Tzu in a lively Taoist discourse that opposes the ideas of Confucius and Mo Tzu. These philosophers argued for particular ways for improving the condition of man, each contradicting the other. Chuang Tzu argued that the processes of nature unify all things, so that humanity should seek to live at one with nature and not impose upon it. He concluded that one could do more by doing nothing.

Chuang Tzu viewed nature as having great spontaneity and change, with all things—large and small, beautiful and ugly—equally important and ever in a constant flux. In this way, he enlarged the notion of the co-dependence of things, one causing change in another, which appears in Buddha’s thought. Chuang Tzu also emphasized the mutual causation of opposites: for example, that life leads to death. His dislike of formal structures leads him to put forward his ideas in imaginary dialogues.